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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to locate multiculturalisms rhetorically, using contemporary rhetorical theorists with which to do so, and using this theorized location to then discuss the implications of a critical multiculturalist pedagogy within the writing classroom in shaping new discursive space in the Academy. First, the paper presents, as a useful resource, an outline of the different types of multiculturalism (Exhibit 1), along with a second table that shows that multiculturalism is struggling with a split identity, its supporters torn on what exactly it is they are supporting. It makes a qualifying distinction that while conservative, liberal, and left-liberal forms of multiculturalism still do trickle down into the classroom, critical multiculturalism has not had a chance to "trickle up" into the material relationships of business and politics per se (which is not to say that critical multiculturalism has not been a tool with which to critique these systems, it is just that academics are doing the critiques). Bearing that caveat in mind, the paper asserts that it is critical multiculturalism that has come the farthest in "refus[ing] to see culture as nonconflictual, harmonious, and consensual," and it is this form of multiculturalism that complicates any aforementioned notion of multiculturalism. According to the paper, students simply do not want to, or lack the tools to, address difference and borderlines in a critical way once they enter the Academy; furthermore, the same holds true for many instructors. The paper asserts that the writing classroom is such a space and opportunity with which to enact this critical multiculturalist pedagogy. It then focuses on why this is so. Lists 17 works cited. Exhibits 1 and 2 (which contains quotes from Thomas West and Peter McLaren) are attached. (NKA)

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Critical Multiculturalism, Pedagogy, and Rhetorical Theory: A Negotiation of Recognition.

by Jennifer Clary-Lemon

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Critical Multiculturalism, Pedagogy, and Rhetorical Theory: A Negotiation of Recognition

~"liberation is never an encapsulated fulfillment of some prefigured end constructed in the temple of memory but a lived tension between the duration of history and the discourse of possibility. It resides in an approach to the 'Aufhebung'—our passing into the "not-yet," and seeking the immanent utopia in the crisis of meaning and the social relations that inform it."
-Peter McLaren

This talk aims to locate multiculturalisms rhetorically, using contemporary rhetorical theorists with which to do so, and using this theorized location to then discuss the implications of a critical multiculturalist pedagogy within the writing classroom in shaping new discursive space in the Academy. First, though, an outline of the different types of multiculturalism is useful, which I have shown here on exhibit one. Also in exhibit one is a second table that shows that multiculturalism is struggling with a split identity, its supporters torn on what exactly it is they're supporting.

While it is hard to pin down precisely what is meant by the term "multiculturalism;" the divisiveness of multiculturalism as a concept can be explained as a balancing act between two dominant sides: the side that wishes to efface cultural difference (conservative and liberal multiculturalisms), and the side that wishes to embrace this difference (left-liberal multiculturalism).

One cannot simply compare this or that form of multiculturalism as ideologically "equal" to that of another; while it is true, for example, that corporate and liberal forms of multiculturalisms pervade business, politics and occasionally pedagogy (in the form of the large corporate university), the same cannot be said of critical multiculturalism, which is relegated primarily to the Academy. Thus I will make a qualifying distinction here that while conservative, liberal, and left-liberal forms still do trickle down into the classroom, critical multiculturalism has not had a chance to "trickle up" into the material relationships of business and politics per se

(which is not to say that critical multiculturalism has not been a tool with which to critique these systems—it is just that academics are doing the critiques). Hence, the problematic limitedness of any such theoretical tool should be noted. Bearing that caveat in mind, I assert that it is critical multiculturalism that has come the farthest in "refus[ing] to see culture as nonconflictual, harmonious, and consensual" (McLaren, "White Terror" 53), and it is this form of multiculturalism that complicates any aforementioned notion of multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism is resistant; it offers up the problematic identity of multiculturalism as the whole point—that identity, both individual and collective, is problematic, conflicted, and anything but easily negotiated. It is this type of multiculturalism that I use most in situating multiculturalism within rhetorical theory.

Regardless of the way one conceives of multiculturalism, it is clear that is has changed the discursive structures that surround it; multiculturalism has provided new ways of thinking about power, oppression, and language. Thus multiculturalism can be both viewed as a rhetorical construct (or rhetorical situation) and it can be theorized, or located, rhetorically.

In "An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric," Hans Blumenberg asserts that "Lacking definitive evidence and being compelled to act are the prerequisites of the rhetorical situation" (441). "To see oneself in the perspective of rhetoric, " Blumenberg claims, "means to be conscious both of being compelled to act and of the lack of norms in a finite situation" (437). Lloyd Bitzer, in "The Rhetorical Situation" defines a rhetorical situation as "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (303). It seems as though multiculturalism is most certainly a rhetorical construct, created out of the problematic constructs of social and cultural oppression, which create an exigence for the movement toward social and political equality.

What constructs multiculturalism rhetorically is that, despite its waxing-and-waning popularity as a movement, it is not quite known (or at least, there has not yet been consensus) about what multiculturalism is, who it works for, or who it affects. Depending on one's stance, the very definition of the term changes; it can be a tool for liberation or a tool for continued oppression, affecting (or not being able to affect) different audiences in a myriad of different ways. The primary way that multiculturalism works (or doesn't) is through the invited language that it provokes. What has arisen out of discussions of multiculturalism are new ways of thinking, being, and ultimately (for it is always rhetorical), of acting.

The continuum of multiculturalism as I have shown on the overhead, struggles with binaries;" while critical multiculturalism may offer up a way out of existing binaries, it is important to situate the problem of binaries rhetorically. I turn to Rorty's "Philosophy Without Mirrors." In this article, Rorty asserts that there are two classes of philosophies: those that are based on the discovery of truths or essences, and those that "edify," those that look to "make connections," or that "attempt to reinterpret our familiar surroundings on the unfamiliar terms of our new inventions" (360). Although the first type of philosophy is what most scientific knowledge-building is based upon, it is this second sort of knowledge-building that concerns Rorty the most, precisely because of its ability to "pursue incommensurable aims in an incommensurable vocabulary" (360). It seems as though the most philosophical thing that one can do is to negotiate the incommensurable, not to find commensurability, but to, as Rorty asserts, "continue a conversation" (373). Critical multiculturalism struggles against commensurability, unlike conservative or liberal multiculturalism, which use binaries to look for some way to make the situation of cultural difference commensurable in some way or another, whether in looking for the essence of sameness or the essence of difference.

The ability to be incommensurable stresses the importance of negotiation, dealing with an opposition, and being "intentionally peripheral" (369). The whole point of edifying philosophy, it seems, is "continuing a conversation rather than at discovering truth" (373)—which, when blended with Blumenberg's definition of rhetoric, create rhetoric—and critical multiculturalism—as edifying philosophies, each in its own right. Yet these two do overlap, each resisting binaries in order to offer up choice, to rethink existing discourses of power, to react. Further resisting the notion of any basis of essential philosophy within critical multiculturalism, Peter McLaren, a prominent educational and cultural theorist asserts, "no single unsurpassable and 'authentic' reality can be reached through 'experience' since no experience is preontologically available outside of a politics of representation" ("White Terror" 68).

It is this politics of representation that is one such overlap in the arenas of rhetoric and critical multiculturalism. Negotiating identity within discursive spaces, as is discussed in Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," depends upon such representation in creation of the public sphere. This negotiation and participation is critical in gaining access to existing institutional (and ideological) power structures. The idea of a public sphere, according to Fraser, needs to be reconfigured because as the current Habermasian ideal holds, it "conflates at least three analytically distinct things: the state, the official-economy of paid employment, and arenas of public discourse" (57).

While a construction of a "public sphere" in this way is central to existing theories of democracy (57), it is problematic in that it assumes an ideal in which there is equal representation of discursive participation in each area, a utopia that "connote[s] the ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters" (59), while assuming only one (a "bourgeois masculinist" (62) elite public, a public that does not accurately or fairly represent the multitudes

of publics (61). Fraser introduces the idea of "subaltern counterpublics," "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses" (67). This resonates with Peter McLaren's critical multiculturalist concept of a "border identity," one that is

> not simply an identity that is anticapitalist and counterhegemonic but is also critically utopian...A provisional utopia [that] is not a categorical blueprint for social change (as in fascism) but a contingent utopia where we anticipate the future through practices of solidarity and community...We can achieve this by negotiating with the borders of our identity—those unstable constellations of discursive structures—in our search for a radical otherness that can empower us to reach beyond them (McLaren, "White Terror" 66).

Border identities are those that "are erupting at the borderlines of cultural instability, in the transgressive act of re-membering, and through the disavowal and refashioning of consciousness on the in-between spaces of cultural negotiation and translation" ("Multiculturalism" 218), exactly the type of action or negotiation such a counterpublic that Fraser suggests might create. Such a subaltern counterpublic could be, in fact, a borderline.

One large-scale problem with tackling multiculturalism within the Academy is that, due to the conservative or liberal multiculturalist stance that most academic institutions have (subscribing to "melting pot" and other essentializing theories), and the non-critical glimpse of "multiculturalism" that homogeneous groups of students are exposed to in elementary and high school (Black History month, for example), more often then not this "produce[s] an aversion to rather than a respect for difference" (McLaren "Multiculturalism" 195). Students simply don't want to, or lack the tools to, address difference and borderlines in a critical way once they enter

the Academy; furthermore, the same holds true for many instructors. I assert that the writing classroom *is* such a space and opportunity with which to enact this critical multiculturalist pedagogy; however, the writing classroom as transformative public space is not without its problems.

Writing, as a secondary discursive practice, is a tool of power, and the literacy created by teaching this discursive practice, "translational/critical literacy" is what allows "Effective participation in—or resistance to—dominant cultural institutions" (Vandenberg 552). Further, as McLaren reminds us, "we must remember that dominant discourses [such as high literacy training] are sites of struggle and their meanings are linked to social struggles and labor/economic relations and then naturalized in particular textual/linguistic referents" ("White Terror" 63). This struggle is noticeable even in critical pedagogies themselves, as exemplified in Peter Vandenberg's assertion in "Taming Multiculturalism: The Will to Literacy in Composition Studies," that "Even oppositional, liberatory, and critical pedagogies, by reflecting the deeply embedded civil-society values of their agents and the sorting function of the institution in which they are allowed to appear, inevitably necessitate that students learn resistance through patterns of conformity" (553). Vandenberg goes on to assert that within these critical negotiations of difference the most determining is, "literacy, rather than any other possibility, as *the* most crucial element of difference…writing remains the ticket inside" (555). The danger that lies within the writing classroom as a place for the negotiation of cultural change is that it runs the risk of severely altering, and possibly losing, the "pre-literate heritage" (562) of subaltern groups.

The only way to come to terms with this identity-changing idea of literacy while still embracing it as a tool for some cultural change (or negotiation of change), is to recognize that the writing classroom will enculturate students. But perhaps it is in instructors' best interests, in

teaching any liberatory pedagogy, to make students aware of this literate enculturation that runs the risk of dominating othered students' own subaltern voices even as it tries to give them a voice with which to speak in dominant institutions. Or perhaps it would also be wise to create the writing classroom as a public sphere that obviates the differences between Fraser's "masculinist bourgeois" public that students are required to participate in, and the "subaltern counterpublics" that they also participate within. Still, Vandenberg's warning that "As teachers, we might help students more critically examine any claims, including those of multiculturalism, that propose cultural rehabilitation through dominant literacies" (565) is one worth heeding, and one that I do not attempt to overthrow by my discussion of multiculturalism in the writing classroom. The two ways of theorizing and negotiating multiculturalism in the classroom that I mention next I do not propose as "cultural rehabilitation," a way of discovering a truth about culture or identity; rather, I see them as rhetorical ways of reacting to the incommensurability of an edifying philosophy, ways of struggling with and participating in the conversation.

Both Thomas West's and Peter McLaren's theories of classroom interaction that I use here are based on a critical conception of multiculturalism. Each has tried to battle the problems of the binary that exists in the continuum of multiculturalism, trying to come to terms with negotiating difference without striving toward, as McLaren's epigraph says, "some prefigured end;" I have chosen these two theories of praxis for their ability to keep the idea of multiculturalism an edifying one, drawing us into the "not-yet" (McLaren "Multiculturalism" 217). I outline each here in the attached exhibit two.

In *Signs of Struggle: The Rhetorical Politics of Cultural Difference*, Thomas West argues for a basis of classroom interaction that is located in difference. West uses Chandra Mohanty's "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s" to differentiate

his conception of difference from a simple conservative or liberal multiculturalist approach. This resonates with Fraser's idea of subaltern counterpublics; however, West's ideas involve somewhat more agonistic negotiation of dominant and subaltern or "othered" discourses. Even though this critique of civitas does challenge civil-society values, West maintains that this method forces students (and teachers) to rearticulate a monoculture because they cannot remain disengaged from the "emotionally charged rhetorical politics of difference" (Worsham, qtd in West 7).

West wishes to enable difference rather than pluralize it, recognizing that often difference is irreducible. He invokes the concept of negotiation "that more consciously evokes its Latin roots: to create a sense of unease" (21). This concept of negotiation, West argues, should be at the basis of classroom praxis, and "should be conceived as a 'borderland' rhetorical strategy" (21), one that works to create border identities. West also critically locates race within his concept of negotiation, and calls for, as a result of this kind of classroom praxis, "a shift from naturalistic and scientific understandings of race to a hermeneutics of race wherein the significance of race to cultural difference is underscored rather than ignored" (4). What saves West's agonistic model from being an antagonistic one, however, is in his notion of a "praxis of shelter," a discursive classroom space that allows some relief from the contact zone (124-5). West differentiates a praxis of shelter from the concept of "safe house," claiming that he intends such a praxis to be an active, rather than passive construction.

While West's agonistic model and idea of a praxis of shelter is comparable to Fraser's subaltern counterpublics, a distinction must be made. The writing classroom must be understood as an artificial environment, rather than a voluntary one, that forces students to engage with one another, rather than having them spontaneously engage with each other. No pedagogical model

can recreate the voluntary nature of Fraser's concept. Yet West's model does suggest the possibility of hybridity, of constructing new identities through heated (and sometimes painful) dissensus about difference, regardless of the possible artificialness of a classroom construct. This concept is also taken up by Peter McLaren, in his theorizing about critical pedagogy.

The basis of McLaren's theory of pedagogical praxis differentiates from West's in that it relies upon student and teacher solidarity that "develops out of the imperatives of freedom, liberation, democracy, and critical citizenship" ("Multiculturalism" 213). McLaren does not mean by this that there must be an empty pluralistic view of identity and culture. In order to avoid "undermining the very concept of democratic public life," McLaren suggests that "we reassert the concept of totality…'as both a system of relations and *overdetermined structure of difference*'" (207). This concept of a totality could, McLaren asserts, "offer a *provisional* engagement with discourses of the Other in a way that can be unifying without dominating and that can provide for supplementary discourses" (208). This idea of a provisional totality could provide the basis for a liberatory pedagogy; this would then be furthered by critical steps such as critiques of master narratives, calls for "attention to the dominant meaning systems readily available to students," and critical evaluations of the culture of whiteness (214).

What West and McLaren offer in their theories of critical pedagogies are ways to wrestle with and create indeterminacy and incommensurability within the university classroom, without succumbing to an "'either-or' logic of assimilation and resistance" (McLaren 206). Although West and McLaren choose different ideological and discursive sites with which to base their negotiations of culture and identity upon, both utilize critical concepts of difference within these sites to arrive at similar conclusions for such praxes.

The one critique of both of these critical pedagogies that is worth noting is that brought up by the Chicago Cultural Studies Group in their essay "Critical Multiculturalism." One of the major critiques they have of current critical multiculturalism is that it is based on an Anglo-American version, rather than one that has application on a more international basis. More specifically (and this is perhaps more thoughtfully anticipated by Nancy Fraser), the Chicago Cultural Studies Group asserts that "a major limitation on the relevance of Western left-cultural theory to non-Western countries is the presupposition of a liberal-public discursive space in (and for) which domestic cultural theory has been formulated" (117). This is relevant to both West and McLaren's theories of pedagogies, because in order for anyone outside of Western academic discourse to employ such a critical multiculturalist stance, there must be some kind of "autonomy of criticism as a field and its separation from sponsorship and the state" (117)—this has implications both for post-secondary education in non-Western states as well as the non-Western student faced with a perceived non-sheltering pedagogy. I agree with the Chicago Cultural Studies Group that in order to come up with a truly critical multiculturalist pedagogy, "we will have to attend carefully to the context-specific inflections of categories like 'politics' and 'autonomy'" (117). Both West and McLaren assume discursive spaces that do rest on the autonomy of the academy from the state and a Western concept of civil-society (if only, as in West's case, to go against it): one in which there is the choice of conflict, emotion, and critique. Thus West and McLaren's praxes should be viewed as useful only in Western society, and not as pedagogies that could resist context-specific change.

While it is obvious that every theoretical basis from which to forge a pedagogy from refracts its own biases, critical multiculturalism, I maintain, is the most useful and thoughtful edifying theory that has emerged out of the multiculturalist construct. It is not without its

problems, though, and I believe this arises primarily out of the fact that, as Trinh T. Mihn-ha suggests, "When binaries no longer organize, the difficulty then becomes speaking from no clearly defined place" (229). Critical multiculturalism has arisen out of a "crisis of meaning"—out of what it means to be with or without power, with or without identity, with or without the ability to negotiate. Even more, it is multiculturalism's rhetorical nature that allows it to be invented and reinvented, and to reinvent the discourse that surrounds it. It is the lack of norms and compulsion to act that has defined multiculturalism in the first place, and which continues to redefine it as something slippery, "intercultural, intersubjective, [and] interdisciplinary..." as Mihn-ha asserts, "To cut across boundaries and borderlines is to live aloud in the malaise and categories of labels; it is to resist simplistic attempts at classifying, to resist the comfort of belonging to a classification" (107).

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Exhibit 1

Types of Multiculturalism

Conservative/Corporate Multiculturalisms	--touts universalism for hegemonic aims; the "Benneton Effect"
Liberal Multiculturalism	--based on the concept of sameness, or equality among all races
Left-Liberal Multiculturalism	--recognizes cultural difference as important but can "exoticize 'otherness'" "and ignore the historical and cultural 'situatedness' of difference"
Critical/Resistance Multiculturalisms	-- resists the "essentialist logic" of forms of multiculturalism that look to either efface difference or embrace it (and reduce it to a problematic binary)

Effaces Cultural Difference	**Embraces Cultural Difference**
Conservative/ Corporate and Liberal Multiculturalisms	Left-Liberal Multiculturalisms
--operates, as Charles Taylor asserts, as a "politics of universalism, emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens, and the content of this politics has been the equalization of rights and entitlements" --stresses cooperation, negotiation, and an egalitarian plurality, but often results in an "idealized equality" (Gordon and Newfield). -- has been criticized for resulting in "moral relativism" --an agreement on a common "core" of culture (often one that appeals somehow to the ideals of a democratic society), is necessary --opponents argue that a common culture "core" is almost impossible and can obscure current or historical systems of domination and power, negate cultural identity, and insist (or reinforce) the idea of a hegemonic culture.	--embraces or engages cultural differences as platforms from which to build alliances --honors cultural difference, specificity, and identity, recognizing the intersectionality of cultural difference. --Critics of this viewpoint argue that intersectionality can result in a factioning that produces no center from which to organize for action. --problematic because as it notes cultural diversity, it may ignore some of the common social or historical conditions that form identity. --It runs the risk of essentializing or exoticizing difference.

Exhibit 2

Enacting Multiculturalist Pedagogy

Thomas West *Signs of Struggle: The Rhetorical Politics of Cultural Difference*	**Peter McLaren** "Multiculturalism and the Post-Modern Critique: Toward a Pedagogy of Resistance and Transformation."
--"Difference seen as benign variation (diversity), for instance, rather than as conflict, struggle, or the threat of disruption, bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious, empty pluralism" (Mohanty 146). --classrooms need to negotiate cultural difference, "expanding the ground rules for risky interaction, while it [a critical agenda] recognizes, analyzes, and critiques the rhetorical politics of othering at every turn" (West 6). --students should formulate communities that "more than tolerate disruptive difference…they…must creatively and forcefully rearticulate the ground rules for hegemonic struggle, ideological conflict, and contested versions of citizenship" (6). --This method, according to West, "necessarily means [the] critiquing of some of the more cherished ideals of liberalism: governance through negotiated consensus, tolerance, and civility" (7) --Invokes "praxis of shelter" where marginalized groups can "channel the affective energy of anger over conditions of alienation, exploitation, and oppression toward the development of alternative perspectives and thoughtful social action" (124).	-- identity and culture depend upon liberatory goals and a contingent shared vision of "democratic community" (207). --criticizes agonistic models (such as West's), asserting that they "often fail to see how crippling the valorizing of difference, fragmentation, and agonistics can be" (207). -- In order to avoid "undermining the very concept of democratic public life," McLaren suggests that "we reassert the concept of totality…'as both a system of relations and *overdetermined structure of difference*'" (207). -- McLaren differentiates between master discourses that seek to dominate, and metadiscourses that "avoid a unifying logic that monolithically suppresses or forecloses meaning" (210). --"provisional totality" as a metadiscourse -- in the classroom, an educator must challenge "'the logic of dialogue as equal linguistic exchange,'" examining "the ediological interests of the speaker, the social overdeterminations of utterances, and the social contexts in which utterances are both historically and culturally understood" (216).

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